



LOYAL HEIGHTS PLAYFIELD IMPROVEMENTS **PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING #1**

Wednesday, June 1, 2005
Loyal Heights Community Center

MEETING SUMMARY – DRAFT

PAT Members Present:

Royal Alley-Barnes	Paul Fuesel
Patrick Brake	Peter Goodall
Kelly Bryant	Kelly Jones
Ellen Butzel	Nancy Brown Toland
Dennis Cook	Andrew Westmark

PAT Members Absent:
none

Other attendees: Erin Devoto, Parks Planning and Development Director
Cathy Tuttle, Parks Planner

Meeting Facilitator: Royal Alley-Barnes

Construction Schedule: Construction start: 3rd Quarter 2006

Welcome: The PAT sign-in sheet was circulated, members introduced themselves and ground rules of careful listening and response were presented.

Role of PAT: The overall role of the PAT, as directed by Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds, is to discuss the field's use, design, and traffic and parking concerns. The PAT members should report back to their constituent community as the park design progresses. The set task for the first Loyal PAT meeting was to review and comment on field use and design.

Previous Meeting Notes: NA

Public Process Review: Parks Planner Cathy Tuttle described the process that preceded the PAT meetings including the Pro Parks Levy passed by the voters in 2000 and the latest version of the Joint Athletic Field Development Program (JAFDP) approved by Seattle City Council in 2002 that directed this park improvement project. Parks staff will take notes at PAT meetings, and the meeting summaries will be put on the project website after being approved by the PAT.

Discussion

- Kelly Jones asked when it was appropriate to speak out publicly about issues concerning the PAT or the project. For example, would it be appropriate to write a letter to a newspaper or speak at a meeting in support of the project or should PAT members remain neutral?
- Erin Devoto answered that the PAT acts in an advisory role. Anything said at the PAT meeting is part of the public record and the public can contact PAT members (via PAT chair Royal Alley-Barnes or Project Planner Cathy Tuttle). The PAT members are representing their groups and communities and can

Speak out to these groups. Some of the issues at Loyal Heights Playfield involve larger Park or City policies, including JAFDP and Pro Parks Levy decisions. PAT members and their constituents can speak to the Board of Park Commissioners about these larger policy issues.

- Kelly Bryant asked how the public was contacted for this meeting. Cathy Tuttle answered that postcards, project signs, the project website, press releases and email are used to keep people informed of community and PAT meetings.
- Peter Goodall asked if all neighbors close to the project were informed about the meeting. Cathy Tuttle answered that all nearby neighbors were informed via approximately 2500 postcards that were sent prior to each public meeting to people living in the Loyal Heights neighborhood as well as to other people interested in the project.
- Several PAT members asked how the public was informed about this project during the JAFDP process and during the years after the Pro Parks Levy was passed. Parks staff answered that the JAFDP included community outreach and that the Levy improvement project outreach started with the first community meeting in March 2005.
- Nancy Brown Toland commented that she feels the Parks communication process is broken. The many neighbors she spoke with had no idea that Parks was planning on removing the grass from Loyal Heights Playfield and replacing it with synthetic material after Parks sent cards to homes and signs were posted at the park. The information on the cards and signs said, "Improve playfield surface," not "replace with synthetic turf." Patrick Brake commented that he knew about the synthetic turf through his involvement in his sports organization, not because he is a neighbor. Cathy Tuttle commented that this lack of understanding was addressed in all Parks public outreach materials – on signs, press releases, website and postcards – after the first public meeting.

Field Use Description:

Parks Senior Recreation Coordinator Dennis Cook introduced a monthly schedule of the projected 2007 field hours for discussion. The hours of field use are projected to remain relatively the same as current use during the spring and summer for baseball. Additional hours are anticipated from late August through February for football and soccer.

Discussion

- Several PAT members asked why this field was selected for synthetic improvements when many fields are available throughout the city. Dennis Cook answered that this field was selected for improvement because it is an already lighted field in the northwest sector.
- PAT members asked that the field hours spreadsheet show weekend, daytime and evening use and not be divided up just by monthly use. Cathy Tuttle will request this level of analysis from Parks staff. The need is to show actual hours when the field was and will be scheduled, not hours of use.
- Kelly Jones said that there are limited times Little League baseball teams want to play – evenings starting at 5PM and weekends. Dennis Cook concurred that there are many times fields are unscheduled.
- Patrick Brake said 2/3 of the projected new hours were hours when the field could not have been used because it was too soggy or torn up. He said local football and soccer teams need places to practice.
- Kelly Jones said that Loyal Heights was the only 90' diamond that Ballard Little League had access to. She said she reserves the field every weekday

as well as Saturday. She wondered if adult softball and Little League games should be scheduled at the same time on the field. Dennis Cook said that not having 2 games simultaneously on the field could limit the playing schedule.

- Ellen Butzel wondered what priority teams that are already using the field have and whether there is a priority in field use by youth or adult teams. Dennis Cook said that existing teams have priority and that the priority for field use is youth games, practices, and then adult use.
- Andrew Westmark commented that teams will drive as far away as Everett and Fife to use a field.
- Andrew Westmark and Patrick Brake said the field lighting needed to be improved for soccer and football. They agreed lighting might be sufficient for mod [modified for youth with 20' x 40' minimum fields] soccer and youth select soccer. Several people said that select soccer teams play and practice year round.
- A PAT member asked if soccer players were more limited by lack of synthetic or lack of lights. Westmark said that soccer players are more limited by the lack of synthetic fields than by lights and that co-rec adult teams would want to use this field.
- Kelly Bryant said improved field lighting would also benefit the neighbors and would be a win-win for the project.
- Nancy Toland Brown asked how to find out when the community could use the field. Royal Alley-Barnes said the field use information was faxed weekly to the community center and should be posted. Nancy Brown Toland said that in the past when she has asked for the field schedule at the Loyal Heights Community Center she was told that the Center was completely separate from the playfield and the staff could not direct her to where she could find the information.
- Royal Alley Barnes and Dennis Cook will follow up with the community center staff to make sure these hours are readily available to the public.
- PAT members discussed what other games might be played on the field in the future including ultimate Frisbee and lacrosse. Dennis Cook mentioned that girl's and boy's lacrosse is a rapidly growing sport and that field lines are different for each.
- PAT members wanted to know if high schools were using the field. Cook said not at this time. Blanchette High School has a new field that is heavily used. Patrick Brake said youth football players don't overuse the field but that the field is often torn up by older football players.

Q&A memo:

Royal Alley-Barnes asked PAT members to review a memo on the project design that highlighted parking, safety, lights, green space, environmental sustainability, and economic concerns. She asked PAT members to discuss field design in the context of this memo.

- Kelly Jones said she was a neighbor of the field but also was president of Ballard Little League and wondered how her neighbors not involved in athletics thought of the field.
- Nancy Toland Brown said she has talked to many neighbors and they all commented on how much they enjoy watching organized sports in the park. The neighbors enjoy hosting the athletic community but the park is a shared neighborhood playfield. The current proposed changes to the park

feel to her and the neighbors she has talked to like Parks is taking the field away from the neighborhood and giving it completely to the sports community.

- Peter Goodall said the field was a neighborhood amenity and that the field gets lots of neighborhood use when not in use for athletics. People ride bikes, fly kites, sit in the grass and have lots of passive use.
- Kelly Jones said all of the neighborhood uses could happen on a synthetic field other than “taking off your shoes to feel the grass.” She said Little League can’t play with rain or in the mud. She said a new grass field at Wilson-Pacific School is already so overused that it is a lousy field again. There were holes in the outfield and injuries from bad bounces and that grass fields had serious safety issues for older youth players.
- Royal Alley-Barnes said the types of activities allowed on the field would not change much other than a stricter enforcement of off-leash rules. Some PAT members said they often call Animal Control and off-leash users are ticketed but that this continues as a frequent use of the existing field.
- Erin Devoto encouraged PAT members to go to Park Board meetings to discuss policy changes in field use but said the PAT and this project could not change Park policies.
- Paul Fuesel commented that neighbors support athletic use of the field but also want a neighborhood park. He wondered if the surface makes the field less of a neighborhood park.
- Ellen Butzel said she understood that as Seattle grows, the need for fields grows but Loyal Heights is not just for sports. She said the property was purchased by the city as a playfield, not an athletic facility.
- Royal Alley-Barnes said the city has grown and sports uses have grown and demand is high for athletic fields. PAT members asked why if there are fields with better parking and lighting that this field was selected for synthetic surface upgrades. She said that each sector of the city needed good athletic fields and Loyal Heights is a lighted field in the northwest that already serves this community and needs to be improved.
- Paul Fuesel said that the field needs to be an athletic field but still serve neighborhood and community uses. This can be a design solution and is related to how the neighbors access the field.
- Nancy Brown Toland said the JAFDP process did not inform the Loyal Heights community that this field would be turned into a synthetic field and that the JAFDP document says the synthetic material is “proposed” not definite.
- Kelly Bryant said she agreed that the design needs to meet the needs of organized sports and community use. She would also like a better idea of what the field will look like on the ground and feels some neighborhood issues would have been avoided if they had known more about the project in 2000 when the Pro Parks Levy was passed.
- Erin Devoto said the citizen Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee approves project schedules and that this project was scheduled to start in 2005.
- Patrick Brake said he lives near the field and wants the best fields possible for his own children and his teams. He said teams from Everett wouldn’t use the field. The field was for the community. He said he was tired of picking up dog litter and filling holes with sand prior to every Ballard Junior Football game. He said if the field was a grass field for the

community that he would lose participation in sports.

- Nancy Brown Toland said that in 5 years of living across the street and using the field she has never had dog litter problems but she has had problems with a lot of garbage left on the field after football practice and games.
- Royal Alley-Barnes said the designated purpose of the field was not changing. Health and fitness are important Parks goals for youth.
- Andrew Westmark said that he didn't understand why synthetic fields were unwelcoming. He said he enjoys running around and playing with his family on a level synthetic field and that it is fun.
- Ellen Butzel said that the synthetic material was not of concern but the increase in use was of concern. Because there aren't enough fields in Seattle she worries that this will be an overused field.
- Nancy Toland Brown said she does support a grass field for its smell, feel, the fact that it produces oxygen.
- Paul Fuesel said the design should be a welcoming community space and that the current design speaks only to a particular user group – athletes.
- Peter Goodall wondered how design could bridge the various field user groups and how an athletic field could still be a community park.

The group agreed to continue the discussion on June 13 from 7-8:30 PM. The final PAT meeting will be on June 22.

Handouts:

* Agenda, biographies of PAT members, project timeline, project fact sheet, projected 2007 field hours, summaries of 3/1/05 and 4/26/05 community meetings, schematic design, JAFDP field conversion priorities, and a Q&A memo for discussion

Summary By:

Cathy Tuttle

Additional Information is Available:

- Park web site: <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/proparks/projects/loyalheightsplayfield.htm>
- Cathy Tuttle, Seattle Parks Planner, (206) 684-7033; cathy.tuttle@seattle.gov
- Royal Alley-Barnes, Seattle Parks Operations Manager and Sports field Review Coordinator, (206) 684-4561; royal.alley-barnes@seattle.gov